At Risk Species Meeting - Francis Marion Forest Plan Revision
Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests Headquarters
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212

Facilitator: Jeff Holmes, Executive Director of The Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy

Objective: Solicit partner feedback incorporating the best available scientific information into the metrics, weights and rankings of ecological and biological sustainability

Ecological and biological ("habitats and species") sustainability will be evaluated using the Ecological Sustainability Evaluation (ESE) Tool with input from some of the most knowledgeable conservation scientists in the region.

Day 1 April 15	**Terrestrial Plants**
9 am to 11:00	Fire adapted ecosystems
11:15 am to 12:30	Plants
1:30 pm to 4:00pm	Plants

Day 2 - April 16	**Other At Risk Species**
9:00 am to 10:00 am	Review of ecosystems
10:15 to 12:00 noon	Birds (approx. 12 species identified)
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm	Amphibians/Reptiles/Ter Invertebrates (approx. 14 species identified)
3:15 to 4:00 pm	Mammals (approximately 7 species identified)

Day 3 April 17	**Aquatics**
9:00 am to 12 noon	Watershed Health
1:00 pm to 4:00	Aquatic Species

The Ecological Sustainability Evaluation Tool is software that uses "open standards" for conservation planning. Open standards were developed by The Nature Conservancy over a decade ago and have since been adopted by numerous agencies and non-governmental organizations globally as clear, unambiguous protocols for evaluating, prioritizing and sharing ecological and biological sustainability variables as well as developing and prioritizing strategies for restoration and maintenance. Briefly, the Ecological Sustainability Evaluation Tool and open standards allow scientific experts to set thresholds, or "yardsticks," for various attributes of habitats and species along the following broadly-accepted scale:

- Very Good: (Sustainable) Element conditions are optimal; associated species' populations should remain robust and potentially even expand.
- Good: (Sustainable) Element conditions are acceptable; associated species' populations should remain stable.
- Fair: (Unsustainable) Element conditions are slightly inadequate; although associated species' populations may persist for some time, they may be subject to gradual decline.
- Poor: (Unsustainable) Element conditions are severely inadequate. Associated species' populations are expected to severely decline; localized extirpations are occurring or are imminent.

Actual measurements of conditions on the ground are then compared with this scale and each attribute is given a score of Very Good, Good, Fair or Poor.

In this sample, we examine the impacts of prescribed fire on a fire-dependent ecosystem such as upland longleaf pine:

Key Attribute	**Indicator**	**Indicator Description**	**Poor Range** (set by experts)	**Fair Range** (set by experts)	**Good Range** (set by experts)	**Very Good Range** (set by experts)	**Current Indicator Value** (Based on actual measurements on the ground)	**Current Indicator Rating** (Based on actual measurements on the ground)	**Weight** (importance to sustainability)
Fire Regime	Percent of System Acres Burned at Desired Return Interval	Spatial extent of ecosystem acres burned every 1-3 years, expressed as the percent of total known system acres	<25%	25-50%	51-75%	>75%	**33%**	**Fair**	Very High

The Ecological Sustainability Evaluation Tool uses powerful computer algorithms to track and prioritize large sets of data, such as this sample, leading to clear, concise information to aid the forest planning process.